

# Los Alamos National Laboratory celebrates 1000th transuranic waste shipment

June 26, 2012



LOS ALAMOS, New Mexico, June 26, 2012—Federal, state, and county officials gathered at Los Alamos National Laboratory today to celebrate the 1000th shipment of transuranic waste from the Laboratory to a permanent repository at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, N.M.

The event, which fell on the first anniversary of the Las Conchas forest fire, featured remarks from New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez.

"On the anniversary of Northern New Mexico's largest fire, we are pleased to celebrate this milestone with the Department of Energy and Los Alamos National Laboratory," said Martinez. "Permanently disposing of the waste stored above ground at the Laboratory is one of the state's top environmental priorities and this accomplishment marks significant progress."

Noting that the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant is the primary repository for the waste, Martinez added, "This is an example of New Mexicans working together to solve an environmental challenge and demonstrates the high degree of scientific and technical excellence we have here."

In addition to Governor Martinez, speakers at the event included Frank Marcinowski, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Waste Management for the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management; Kevin Smith, Manager of the National Nuclear Security Administration's Los Alamos Site Office; Laboratory Director Charles McMillan and Los Alamos County Council Chair Sharon Stover.

"We congratulate Los Alamos National Laboratory on the steady progress it has made removing legacy transuranic waste from the Laboratory," Marcinowski said. "Permanently disposing of this waste is a tangible demonstration of the Department of Energy's commitment to being good stewards of the environment."

The Las Conchas wildfire began on June 26, 2011, and consumed more than 156,000 acres. The fire edged close to Laboratory property and came within 3.5 miles of Technical Area 54, Area G, where the Lab's transuranic, or TRU, waste is stored.

Although the TRU waste is stored safely, a decision was made by the Department of Energy, the New Mexico Environment Department and the Laboratory to accelerate the disposal of the 3,706 cubic meters of TRU waste stored above ground at Area G. The new deadline for disposal of this waste is June 30, 2014.

TRU waste consists of clothing, tools, rags, debris, soil and other items contaminated with radioactive material, mostly plutonium. Transuranic elements such as plutonium have an atomic number greater than uranium, so they are labeled transuranic, for "beyond uranium" on the periodic table of elements.

About 90 percent of the current TRU waste inventory is a result of decades of nuclear research and weapons production at the Laboratory and is often referred to as "legacy" waste.

LANL has sent record breaking numbers of shipments to WIPP each of the past three years and is on track to further surpass its record in 2012.

Since October 2011 (the beginning of the current federal fiscal year), LANL has sent 147 shipments to WIPP.

The Laboratory began shipping transuranic waste to WIPP in 1999, and reached the 1000th shipment milestone on June 6, 2012.

"This important milestone would not be possible without the dedication and hard work of many people at the Laboratory," McMillan said. "We also appreciate the support of our partners at the Department of Energy and WIPP, as well as direction from the New Mexico Environment Department, as we continue to safely and efficiently dispose of this waste."

About the [Waste Isolation Pilot Plant](#)

The WIPP is a U.S. Department of Energy facility designed to safely isolate defense-related TRU waste from people and the environment. Waste temporarily stored at sites around the country is shipped to WIPP and permanently disposed in rooms mined out of an ancient salt formation 2,150 feet below the surface. WIPP is located 26 miles southeast of Carlsbad, New Mexico.

**Los Alamos National Laboratory**

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